

PHILIPPINE BOOKSHELF

THEY CALL IT PACIFIC. By Clark Lee. New York: The Viking Press, 1943. 374 pp. \$3.00.

SUEZ TO SINGAPORE. By Cecil Brown. New York: Random House, 1942. 345 pp. \$3.50.

THE WHOLE world is now aware of the fact that the Filipinos were the only people living under an alien flag who fought and are still fighting against the Axis. The Japanese invasion of the Southwest Pacific was not only a test of arms. It is now abundantly clear that it was also a weighing of the colonial policies of the western powers.

These two recent books—one telling the story of the brave resistance of the Philippines and the other about the collapse of Malaya—testify on how America's policy was validated.

IN HIS book Lee has done an outstanding job of careful, straight-from-the-shoulder reporting in the best tradition of the American press. He recaptures the reality of the people who lived the glories and tragedies of war—the stuff that the censors had carved out of the news stories he cabled from Manila and Corregidor. Lee gives the facts as he saw them or got them from eye witnesses with a directness and an understanding of their significance that recreates the scene in all its intensity.

In spite of the confusion arising from the country's unpreparedness for war, the Filipinos fought valiantly and never doubted to the end that help was indeed coming. The assurance of the American officers was enough.

"Hold everything, Joe," these American officers would say, "Those Japs aren't too tough. Our help will be here any day now. You know me and you can trust me when I tell you that. Let's lick hell out of them."

IT IS A different story that Cecil Brown tells. In Singapore, an Indian leader says, "We are ready to fight and die for the defense of Malaya, but we want to be sure that you British also are ready to fight and die for this country."

But Lee's is a story not alone of the magnificent stand of the Filipinos and the Americans against the never-ending flood of Japanese troops. Before he came to Manila, Lee had already watched the Japanese war machine in action against China for several years. He had come to know many of the Japanese military men, their ambitions and plans. And after he escaped from the Philippines, he covered the Battle of the Coral Sea, the landing on Guadalcanal, riding bombers and aircraft carriers through the Southwest Pacific. He tells of his escape from Corregidor on the *Doña Nari*; of what he saw in Australia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, and Pearl Harbor.

IN ONE of the closing passages Lee tells of a scene which he hopes to live long enough to witness: "I want to be there when General Douglas MacArthur raises the American flag over Corregidor again; and then hauls it down and with his own hand raises the flag of the Republic of the Philippines, the symbol of a nation which won its right to life by learning how to suffer and how to die."

Cecil Brown is acid in his criticisms of the British civil and military officials in Singapore and Malaya. He recounts gloomily their lack of foresight, their tardiness in military preparation, and their placid assurance that war would not come to the Far East. He points out the defects of the British policy toward the peoples of Asia and tells of the general lack of confidence of these peoples in the British. Almost the only relief in his otherwise unflattering picture of the British is his constant appreciation of the gallant courage of the British and Australian and Indian fighting men.

BROWN's book is, on the whole, uncomfortable and yet absorbing reading. It is a day to day account of the ten months he spent as a foreign correspondent for Columbia Broadcasting System. After escaping from German-conquered Yugoslavia, Brown made his way to Cairo where he arrived in May 1941. He covered the Free French and British campaign against the Vichy French in Syria, and made a short visit to the front of the British Eighth Army in the Western Desert of Egypt. Brown was then assigned to Singapore where he made his headquarters until about three weeks before its fall in February 1942.

HIS detailed accounts of his never-ending conflicts with the British censors are interesting, but do not quite convince the reader that the writer was invariably right.

The author's description of actual scenes are alive with action. His account of the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, which he witnessed from the deck of the latter ship, is so vivid that one can see the Japanese bombers in formation overhead, and can hear the roar of the diving planes and the dull crash of torpedoes. These passages are the literary cream of a book which is substantial and consistently interesting throughout.

—W.B.C.

—H.M.R.

Opinions expressed in this department are those of the reviewers and not necessarily of the Philippine government.

In the next issue of PHILIPPINES will appear a review of the latest book on American-Filipino cooperation—

BEFORE BATAAN AND AFTER

By Frederic S. Marquardt